

# Backstage of a new archaeology – ‘Invisible’ institutions in the 60s

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**ABSTRACT:** *The 60ies were crucial for the future of archaeology in Portugal, leaded by people aware of the epistemic changes taking place abroad, speaking several languages and conscious of the need to update scientific knowledge to avoid the incidence of foreigner researchers in the territory. This was a time when a new institution – the ‘Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian’ -, together with the ‘Instituto de Alta Cultura’, began and continued to finance archaeological research in Portugal. Other institutions, such as the ‘Sociedade Martins Sarmiento’ (Guimarães) and the ‘Associação dos Arqueólogos Portuguese’ (Lisbon), much contributed to the increasing number of young scholars dedicated to archaeology. Focusing on the first of these two institutions, we will recognize some actors, strategies, means, liaisons and outputs of this “transition generation” and the role it played in the modernization of archaeology in the country.*

## 1. CONTEXTS, QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

Subsequently to the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> National Archaeological Congress (Lisbon, 1958) (NAC), the members of the recently established (1954) Department of Prehistoric archaeology of the Geographic Society of Lisbon (1875) intensively discussed the organizations devoted to this science in the country. Being a natural consequence of the scientific interest produced by that event, it was also the confirmation of a certain specificity of our territory regarding archaeology: the fact that despite the its general relevance, archaeology continued to be studied and financed mainly by privates.

Nevertheless, there was a significant number of institutions comprising archaeology or archaeological work. A reality which related to the increasing number of people searching for archaeology as a way of knowing better the ancestry of the territory according to the newest theories and methods settled by wester archaeological schools.

The interesting thing is that the members of the above-mentioned Department split the existing institutions giving their legal condition, hierarchized as follows:

- 1) Institutes and research centres dedicated to archaeology and responsible for the under graduation of future archaeologists (Institute of Archaeology of Coimbra; Institute of Anthropology of Coimbra; Centre of Archaeological Studies of

Lisbon; Research Centre for Iberian Ethnology of Porto);

- 2) Private scientific societies assuming archaeological research as central in their activities (Association of Portuguese Archaeologists (Lisbon); Portuguese Institute of Archaeology, History and Ethnography (Lisbon); Portuguese Society of Anthropology and Ethnology (Porto); Society Martins Sarmiento (Guimarães));
- 3) Institutions contributing indirectly to the development of Portuguese archaeology in the Metropolis and Overseas territories/provinces (Research Centre of Art and Museology (Lisbon); Portuguese Society of Numismatics (Porto); Research Centre for Overseas Territories and Ethnology (Lisbon)).

Most of these institutions was created in the main Portuguese cities. An understandable situation compared to similar ones known from other western countries, although some of them, like the *Société des Antiquaires de Normandie* (1823), were established in the “periphery”. In Portugal, the only real exception goes to the ‘Society Martins Sarmiento’ (SMS), founded by a wealthy gentry from a small northern city, promoting excavations, building a museum with library and publishing a journal.

But the list unveils more. For instance, the need – conscious or not -, to indorse the pertinence of archaeology as a science in Portugal by comprising it within: 1<sup>st</sup> – universities; 2<sup>nd</sup> – prestigious erudite societies; 3<sup>rd</sup> – institutions linked to colonial policy.

Perhaps more than that, the list exposes one absence: the absence of small local societies founded by erudite (librarians, teachers, journalists, physicians, priests, etc..) allied to modest but knowledgeable citizens worried with the future of their common heritage. Together, they organized conferences, guided tours whereas promoted the study and safeguard of archaeological sites and monuments situated in their territories.

Compared to the number, motivation and financial strength of analogous societies acting in most western countries, one could say that they were almost insignificant. On the contrary. We argue that, exactly because of the lack of facilities, their efforts and enthusiasm must be emphasized within this scope of ideas, beliefs, intentions and achievements. Yes, achievements. All of them, independently of their lifetime, (re)affirmed the importance of their geographies in opposition to the growing centralist role played by Lisbon and the yet deeply engrained idea of cultural and scientific periphery, when it was the peripheries which shaped the country. The concept of periphery was and is not exclusively applied when comparing countries unrelatedly to its actual motives.

Apparently disregarding these small “peripheral” erudite societies - maybe because they had no official links to the Academy -, and not mentioning any southern ones, the list leads us to conclude that by the end of the 50s (and throughout many more years) there were few (but sometimes effectiveness) ways of opposing Lisbon demands, either by imposing the scientific, scholar and social prestige of some of their members; attaching (in)directly others to the predominant political agendas; and, last but not the least, appealing to financial independency of their members belonging to an untouchable social rank (local, regional and/or national).

Independently of these reasons and hypothesis, those listed institutions were founded and endured thanks to individual interests and efforts.

Equally to other human activities, science is encouraged by individual desires, expectations, beliefs and needs. Without them and reinforced by a well tangled network, projects stay as they are - projects (even if reasonable and required) - without being accomplished. Example? The project and organization of the above mentioned 1<sup>st</sup> NAC, celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of José Leite de Vasconcelos (1858-1941), the mastermind and first director of the nowadays known as the National Museum of Archaeology (Lisbon, 1892), the official reason for the unofficial intent of shaping the first national meeting of archaeologists in Portugal. Deprived of the efforts of some institutions and personal wills, it would not take place, as (if we wish to analyse it this way) as a model or cordiality (or should we say survival?) in Portuguese archaeology (Coelho, 2018).

An intent immediately supported by the Association of Portuguese Archaeologists (AAP), the oldest and more respected private institution devoted to heritage and archaeology. Moreover, many of its associates were archaeologists; taught at universities; headed institutes, projects and research groups, directed excavations with the participation of foreigner colleagues, young scholars and students; presented oral papers in international conferences; began to be included in important scientific networks; belonged to governmental institutions responsible for archaeology in the country. But, does this mean that they controlled its practice or on the contrary they were (un)conscious accomplices to the over-all governmental disregard over this science? Or was it their way of contributing to the undergoing archaeological activity in the country, helping its ultimate institutionalization through the financing of some works and the sending of students to other countries to complement their archaeological knowledges? In other words, we believe it was through these official mechanisms that Portuguese archaeology testified (though very scarcely) some innovation and eagerness for innovation, even before 1974.

Additionally, the AAP leaders were perfectly aware of the urgency of innovating the archaeological practice in Portugal, its theories, fieldwork methods and laboratory analyses with the help and/or direct involvement of other sciences, mainly natural ones.

It was the antechamber of the multidisciplinary approach in archaeology, yet long way before the coming of the desirable interdisciplinary one. A path to be accomplished by a young generation of archaeologists responsible for the future of this science in Portugal after the Revolution of 1974 (25<sup>th</sup> April). Until then, archaeology tried to survive occasionally in an adverse political atmosphere, even if mostly protected by the (in some way illusional) university autonomy assured (or allowed) by the authoritarian ‘Estado Novo’ (‘New State’), even during the deceived and most expected ‘Primavera Marcelista’ (‘Marcelo’s Spring’).

In the meanwhile, the private ‘Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian’ (‘Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation’) (FCG) (1956), politically untouchable (thanks to its very healthy and foreigner finances) cultural and scientific institution began to fund various archaeological projects and to provide scholarships. Additionally, Portuguese archaeology started to benefit from the regular presence of European archaeological schools in its territory, such as the German one through the participation of archaeologists from the ‘Deutsches Archäologisches Institut’s’ (1829) delegation headquartered in Madrid. This was only the starting point for a systematic process of internationalization of Portuguese archaeology.

## 2. THE 'SOCIEDADE MARTINS SARMENTO' (1881) AND ITS 'REVISTA DE GUIMARÃES' (1884)

Contradicting the idea of scientific periphery in Portugal, as Francisco Tavares Proença Júnior (1883-1916) did during the two first decades of the 20th century, linking the northcentral city of Castelo Branco to European archaeology, thanks to the wealth and political influence of its family (Martins, 2016), the SMS began to play a renovated role in the development of archaeology in the country since the 50s onwards under the supervision of its president Mário Cardozo (1889-1974).

The first step was related to the obvious disinterest of Lisbon politicians in financing the 2<sup>nd</sup> NAC which should have taken place at the University of Coimbra honouring the life and work of Professor Virgílio Correia (1888-1944). A surprising indifference if we remember the unquestionable success of its first edition. A picture that reminds the one emerged after the 9th International Congress of Anthropology and Prehistoric Archaeology (Lisbon, 1880) (Martins, 2014) and which was not solved by its 15th edition organized once again in Portugal (Coimbra and Porto, 1930).

In face of this, the SMS decided to sustain the decision of the University of Porto in organizing the 'Colóquios Portuenses de Arqueologia' ('Porto Archaeological Colloquiums') (CPA) (1961-1966), hosted by different institutions, including the SMS and several Northern municipalities, at the same time as in 1963 the AAP celebrated its first 100 years with a colloquium and a bibliographic exhibition with the presence of key-note speakers from Spain, France and Germany (Martins, 2005).

And this was most interesting. First, it allowed to create an almost annual space for archaeological discussion attended by professionals (even if this titration should be carefully used when referring to those times), amateurs and foreigner colleagues, namely Spanish. Second, it permitted to decentralize – from Lisbon –, the archaeological activity, making it more visible to a larger auditorium of putative future archaeologists. Third, it facilitated the dialogue between archaeologists and politicians (namely local and regional) by reinforcing the relevance of archaeology in the shaping of identities, specifically northern ones. Finally, it stressed the importance of the University, institutes and museums of Porto, alongside with many local erudite societies – besides the SMS –, in the assertion and progress of archaeology in the country.

An unofficial pronouncement noticeable in many other activities. For instance, in the official journal of the SMS, 'Revista de Guimarães' ('RG').

In fact, the president Mário Cardozo filled some of its pages with detailed reports from the international archaeological meetings which he attended, to

divulge the most recent theoretical discussions and working methods concerning the field and in the laboratory. It was the case for the 'Luso-Spanish Congresses for the Advancement of Sciences' which included sections of prehistory and of archaeology in general (Cardozo, 1960: 562). There, M. Cardozo was getting more aware of the lack of specialization of our archaeologists and, what was more, the outdated way of doing archaeology when compared to what was going abroad, especially in Germany, Britain, France and even Spain which had a long story of close contacts with these (re)innovating schools, to which it was already required to add the American one (Díaz-Andreu, 2012).

And M. Cardozo was peremptory in defending the organization of some of these editions in other cities besides Lisbon, Coimbra and Porto, decentralizing them to Braga, Viana, Guimarães (of the SMS), Viseu or (apparently disregarding Santarém) even Évora, the only city referred by him southern Lisbon. As a matter of fact, M. Cardozo could not ignore the importance of Évora in the establishment of heritage policy in the country since the 19th century and the work done by some of its intellectuals, mostly belonging to the AAP, Institute of Archaeology of the University of Coimbra or to the National Academy of Sciences.

But M. Cardozo went further in his thoughts, considering a holistic approach to the past which should include a multidisciplinary (though he does not name it as so) insight over the local and regional pasts, traditions and natural uniqueness's. Singularities which could eventually and ultimately incentivize and develop the tourism, one of the national panaceas incremented by the journalist and politician António Ferro (1895-1956) based on his 'Política do Espírito' ('Politics of the Spirit') (Acciaiuoli, 2013). Or perhaps linking history, art, archaeology, ethnography and tourism, M. Cardozo hoped to persuade local politicians to capitalize scientific research and culture.

During the 60s, M. Cardozo wrote several papers published at the 'RG' dealing with the need for more adequate national heritage legislation accordingly to UNESCO standards (Cardozo, 1960: 537-550). More than that, he advised rulers sending young students abroad, mainly to England and Germany, to graduate in archaeology. Only then – he underlined –, could be possible to have specialized professors needed to shape an archaeological school in Portugal (Cardozo, 1961: 185-198). And one of these outstanding examples came from the University of Coimbra. With a grant from the FCG, Jorge de Alarcão (1934-) stood for two years at the Institute of Archaeology of the University College of London. Returning to Coimbra, he began to teach archaeology at the University, becoming one of our leading experts in the roman period. In the meanwhile, he divulged recent field and laboratory techniques and methods, namely in the

‘RG’, the first journal to publish some of his most recent archaeological thoughts and reflections (Alarcão, 1964: 379-380).

Moreover, the ‘RG’ was the first place to give space to such young scholars as Vítor Oliveira Jorge (1948-), from the University of Porto, with the paper “Introdução à aplicação de computadores electrónicos em arqueologia” (“Introduction to the use of electronic computers in archaeology”) (‘RG’, 1968), as an attempt to transform archaeology from an exercise of historical construction into a science with its own cultural laws (Oliveira Jorge, 1968: 4-48).

As for others, M. Cardozo considered urgent that archaeology could reach collaboration – including international -, with natural and exact sciences, to be accepted once for all as a science in Portugal, particularly in the eyes of politicians and – more important than that -, of the governmental institutions which dealt with science in Portugal – ‘Instituto de Alta Cultura’ (‘Institute for High Culture’) (IAC) (1952-1976).

### 3. FINAL REMARKS

In 1970, M. Cardozo wrote: this contribution of a new generation, including a notable number of ladies [...] – assure us that there is being shaping among us a numerous and active team of future archaeologists; a team that must be oriented toward new theories and modern research techniques existing for a long time in other countries (Cardozo, 1970: 4)

Again, these words were published in a journal edited by a private erudite society. Of course, there was ‘official’ publications considering equivalent reflexions. For instance, and like the ones from the 1st CAN (see above), the proceedings of the five already mentioned CPA were published in the series ‘Lucerna’, of the journal ‘Studium Generale’, from the Centre for Humanistic Studies of the University of Porto, with the IAC financial support.

Nonetheless, the most recent archaeological news, engendered, applied and disseminated by some referential western archaeological schools, were mostly publicized in Portugal through private or private-public initiatives. This is to say that efforts were made to institutionalize even more the archaeological practice in the country, trying to get together all the (then considered) main institutions partially or entirely dedicated to this science among us. An unofficial joint venture essential to update this science accordingly to international standards, preparing in this way the generation responsible for its near future.

A picture to be profoundly modified after April 1974 thanks to a new generation motivated by the “transition” group to which belonged M. Cardozo. Even so, the role he played then is still scarcely known maybe because he did not teach at University,

directed a national museum or the AAP. But as president of the SMS and director of the ‘RG’ he contributed to the spreading of new theories and practices and incentivized youngsters to go abroad and to collaborate with foreigner colleagues, as the future of archaeology depended on that. And the subsequent years would confirm this scenario.

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